

NCA
VOC FOR IOP/FN
BACKGROUNDER NO. 5-5615
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EAST GERMAN DISSIDENTS

ANNCR:

TWO MONTHS AGO THE WEST GERMAN MAGAZINE "DER SPIEGEL" PUBLISHED A HARSHLY CRITICAL AND REVEALING DOCUMENT DESCRIBED AS A MANIFESTO BY AN EAST GERMAN FEDERATION OF DEMOCRATIC COMMUNISTS -- A FACTION, IT WAS SAID -- OF THE EAST GERMAN COMMUNIST PARTY. VOA CORRESPONDENT MARK HOPKINS HAS THIS REPORT FROM BERLIN.

VOICE:

THE MANIFESTO SURFACED IN WEST GERMANY AS A DARING ASSAULT ON ONE-PARTY TOTALITARIAN RULE IN EAST GERMANY AND THE SOVIET UNION. IT DEMANDED DEMOCRATIC REFORMS, FREE TRAVEL TO THE WEST, AND REUNIFICATION OF A DIVIDED GERMANY. "DER SPIEGEL" SAID THE MANIFESTO CAME FROM AN UNDERGROUND FACTION OF THE EAST GERMAN COMMUNIST PARTY.

NOW, TWO MONTHS LATER, THE MANIFESTO HAS, ODDLY ENOUGH, SLIPPED INTO HISTORY WITH HARDLY A RIPPLE. WESTERN DIPLOMATS IN EAST BERLIN BELIEVE THE MANIFESTO WAS, AND IS, NONETHELESS AUTHENTIC, ALTHOUGH EAST GERMAN AUTHORITIES WENT TO GREAT RHETORICAL LENGTHS TO CHARGE THAT WEST GERMAN INTELLIGENCE FABRICATED BOTH THE MANIFESTO AND THE IDEA OF AN UNDERGROUND DEMOCRATIC COMMUNIST MOVEMENT IN THE EAST.

THESE WESTERN DIPLOMATS SAY, AFTER STUDYING THE MANIFESTO AND WATCHING REACTION, THAT THE DOCUMENT'S HARSH CRITICISM OF UPPER-LEVEL PARTY PRIVILEGES COMES FROM LOWER-LEVEL EAST GERMAN COMMUNISTS, AND THAT THEREFORE THE MANIFESTO DOES REPRESENT DEEP DISCONTENT IN EAST GERMANY. BUT THE EAST GERMAN LEADERSHIP, THESE DIPLOMATS THINK, HAS ISOLATED WHATEVER GROUP THE MANIFESTO REPRESENTS. THERE HAS BEEN NO EVIDENCE OF REFORM OR OF ANY ATTEMPT TO SATISFY GRIEVANCES.

THE MAIN AND LASTING REACTION OF EAST GERMANY'S HONECKER LEADERSHIP IS TO STRIDENTLY DENOUNCE THE MANIFESTO. THIS IS TAKEN BY WESTERN DIPLOMATS AS EVIDENCE THAT IT GENUINELY DISTURBED THE EAST GERMAN PARTY HIERARCHY. BUT IF ANYONE HAS BEEN INTERROGATED, OR IMPRISONED, THERE IS NO EVIDENCE TO SHOW IT. THE EAST GERMAN GOVERNMENT, ACCORDING TO WESTERN DIPLOMATS, USES DISSIDENTS IN SOMETIMES SUBTLE WAYS. IT IS TRUE THAT A MIDDLE LEVEL PARTY MEMBER, RUDOLPH BAHRO, AUTHOR OF A STINGING CRITIQUE OF EAST GERMANY CALLED "THE ALTERNATIVE" A BOOK PUBLISHED IN WEST GERMANY, WAS ARRESTED LAST SUMMER AND HAS NOT BEEN HEARD OF SINCE. BUT THEN AGAIN, OTHER EAST GERMAN DISSIDENT INTELLECTUALS HAVE, IN EFFECT BEEN BOUGHT OFF. THEY GET PRIVILEGES, OR THEY ARE ALLOWED TO TRAVEL TO THE WEST. SO FAR, WESTERN DIPLOMATS SAY, THERE HAVE BEEN NO SHOW TRIALS IN EAST GERMANY. EAST GERMANY TENDS TO FOLLOW THE POLISH TACTIC WITH DISSIDENTS. THE LEADERSHIP TRIES TO NEUTRALIZE THEM.

WJL/RCS